

The University of Chicago

CATHOLIC
COMMERCIAL PUBLISHING IN THE
UNITED STATES

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SEPTEMBER, 1945

By
SISTER MARY LUELLA POWERS

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Catholic Commercial Publishing in the United States¹

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During the years 1943 and 1944 the writer made a study of the output of Catholic commercial publishers in the United States for the period 1930 to 1942. This article is a report of the results of the investigation, undertaken to evaluate the contribution of the Catholic publishers of this country to the field of Catholic literature.

The writer interpreted a "Catholic publisher" as one whose output, for the most part, treated of Catholic subjects and/or general subjects from a Catholic viewpoint. The following classes of Catholic publishers were omitted: (1) those whose main work is in the periodical field, such as George Pflaum, Dayton, (2) publishers of textbooks, such as W. H. Sadlier, New York, (3) publishers of special types of materials, such as McLaughlin and Reilly, Boston, (4) general publishers having strong Catholic departments, such as the Macmillan Company and Longmans, Green and Company, New York, (5) presses of Catholic universities, and (6) presses administered under the auspices of religious congregations. Two exceptions were made in the case of the last group mentioned: America Press, New York, and St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, New Jersey, seemed of sufficient importance to warrant inclusion in the study.

Specifically, the following thirteen publishers were included: (1) America Press, New York, (2) Benziger Brothers, Incorporated, New York, (3) Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, (4) Devin-Adair Company, New York, (5) B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, (6) P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York, (7) John Murphy Company, Baltimore, (8) Frederick Pustet Company, Incorporated, New York, (9) Peter Reilly Company, Philadelphia, (10) Walter Romig and Company, Detroit, (11) St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, (12) Sheed and Ward, Incorporated, New York, and (13) Joseph F. Wagner, Incorporated, New York.

The basic data used in the study comprised a list of approximately two thousand titles published from January, 1930, to December, 1942, by the thirteen publishers enumerated. The primary source from which these titles were derived was the "Weekly Record" of the *Publishers' Weekly*. This department, in the phraseology of its subtitle, "describes this week's new books of all publishers in a convenient reference and buying list for all bookstores and libraries", thereby constituting the most complete current report of titles published in the United States.² Printed catalogs of the publishers were used to supplement the list derived from the item-by-item check of the "Weekly

1. A digest of a dissertation submitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in September, 1945, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

2. The *Publishers' Weekly*, the *American Book Trade Journal*. (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1872-.)

Record" in the 676 issues of the *Publishers' Weekly* for the calendar years 1930 to 1942. Correspondence with the publishers and personal interviews with representatives of the firms were, likewise, fruitful sources of information.

An estimate of the contribution of Catholic commercial publishers to the book trade in the United States from 1930 to 1942 necessitates an acquaintance with the quantity and quality of their production. The first of these two factors is relatively easy to determine objectively; the second can be appraised only with difficulty, if at all.

QUANTITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The quantitative considerations are presented in three main divisions: (1) trends in the volume of Catholic publishing from 1930 to 1942, (2) a comparison of the volume of Catholic publishing with that of all American publishing from 1930 to 1942, and (3) an analysis by publisher of the output of the Catholic firms from 1930 to 1942. The volume was necessarily measured in terms of the number of titles produced—statistics of the number of copies manufactured and distributed, which would have given a truer picture of the book industry, were not and are not available.

Trends in the Volume of Catholic Publishing, 1930-1942

The ebb and flow of the book production of the Catholic publishers during 1930 decade showed in general a close adherence to that of all American publishers—a severe drop in title production during the depression of the early 30's was followed by a gradual return to normalcy from 1934 to 1937. A second period of decline beginning in 1938 synchronized with the early years of World

War II. A sudden and decisive drop in the curve of Catholic book production accompanied the opening of the 1940 decade. This phenomenon was in striking contrast to the experience of publishers in general. In 1940 the general book trade reached its highest peak in twenty-five years, and in 1941 it experienced only a one per cent decrease below the figures for 1940.³ Catholic publishers, on the other hand, issued twenty-three per cent fewer titles in 1940 than in 1939, and thirty-five per cent fewer in 1941 than in 1939.

Two factors may be suggested to account for this contrast between the title production of the Catholic firms and that of publishers in general. One conspicuous reverberation of the war was the greatly augmented interest in technical subjects, and a corresponding expansion in the number of books produced in this field. In 1940 a total of 611 technical titles emanated from American publishers,⁴ an increase of thirty-five per cent over the figures for 1939, and in 1941 a total of 741 titles appeared, an increase of sixty-three per cent over the 1939 output. Since none of the Catholic houses except Bruce are active in the technical field to any appreciable extent, they did not participate in this, the most notable expansion of the book industry in the early 40's. A factor of less significance is the reliance of several of the Catholic publishers, notably Sheed and Ward, one of the largest houses, on the manuscripts of English and continental authors, a source seriously curtailed by the war.

By 1942 publishing in general experienced an ebb, the total number of new books reaching the lowest figure since

3. *Publishers' Weekly*, CXLI (January 17, 1942), 166.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

1935.⁵ One of the most observable characteristics of the thirteen-year period was the tendency on the part of Catholic publishers to issue during the periods of business decline from 1930 to 1933 and from 1938 to 1942 a relatively greater number of editions and reprints of older titles than in the period of business acceleration from 1934 to 1937. With the upturn of industry in the middle 30's publishing energy turned somewhat from the use of existing plates to the manufacture of new ones.

Comparison of the Volume of Catholic Publishing With That of All American Publishing, 1930-1942

In order to arrive at an estimate of the numerical significance of Catholic book production in the general publishing world, a comparison was made between the output of the Catholic houses and American book production in general, as recorded in the *Publishers' Weekly*. During the period 1930 to 1942 the Catholic publishers produced 1,755 new titles, which, as will be observed later, were distributed into thirteen subject fields. The output of all domestic publishers in the thirteen subjects in which the Catholic firms were productive amounted to 86,645 new titles. The Catholic contribution, two per cent, was numerically small.

The significance of this proportion can be better appreciated by a comparison of

the number of productive Catholic publishers with the total number of productive American publishers. For the period under consideration the average number of productive American publishers was 233; the average number of active Catholic publishers was eleven, or slightly less than five per cent of the total number of active publishers. The title production of these active Catholic publishers was two per cent of the total output in the thirteen fields in which they were productive. Thus, it is apparent that, all proportions guarded, Catholic publishing activity was less than half the activity of domestic publishers in general.

It is pertinent to emphasize at this point that this study was concerned with only a portion of the literature emanating from presses administered under Catholic auspices; nor does it consider the Catholic publications of such secular firms as Macmillan and Longmans, Green. The terms "Catholic output" and "Catholic publishers" are used here within the restrictions laid down in the opening paragraphs, and in no sense connote the total Catholic output nor all Catholic publishing in the United States.

Analysis by Publisher of the Output of Catholic Firms, 1930-1942

The presentation of a quantitative view of Catholic publishing up to this point has included two aspects of the subject:

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLIC PUBLISHERS ACCORDING TO THE
NUMBER OF NEW TITLES PUBLISHED, 1930-1942

Number of New Titles Published, 1930-1942	Number of Publishers
1- 50	7
50-100	0
100-200	2
200-300	2
300-400	1
400-500	1
Total	13

5. *Ibid.*, CXLIII (January 16, 1943), 226.

(1) the total volume of the titles issued by the Catholic firms and the trends therein from 1930 to 1942, and (2) the relationship between this portion of book manufacturing and the total book production of all American publishers for the same period. There remains for consideration the quantity of titles produced by each of the Catholic houses separately.

Table 1 shows the distribution obtained when the publishers were grouped according to their output of new titles.

From this tabulation it is apparent that seven firms, or over one-half of the publishers, issued less than fifty new titles each in the entire period. These firms were America Press, Devin-Adair, Murphy, Pustet, Reilly, Romig, and Wagner. Two firms, Kenedy and St. Anthony Guild, issued between one hundred and two hundred titles; two firms, Benziger and Herder, issued between two hundred and three hundred titles; one firm, Sheed and Ward, issued between three hundred and four hundred titles; one firm, Bruce, issued between four hundred and five hundred titles.⁶ These last six publishers

together produced 1,561 new titles, or eighty per cent of the total output of new titles. In other words, slightly less than one-half of the Catholic publishers were responsible for four-fifths of the titles produced.

To clarify further the publishing pattern of the individual houses, the average annual number of new titles issued by each of the publishers was computed. Arranged in a rank order based upon these averages, the publishers appear as in Table 2.

On the basis of these figures, the publishers fall roughly into four groups: (1) Bruce, and Sheed and Ward, producing approximately thirty new titles annually, (2) Benziger and Herder, producing approximately twenty new titles annually, (3) Kenedy and St. Anthony Guild, producing approximately ten new titles annually, and (4) Wagner, Reilly, Pustet, Devin-Adair, America Press, Murphy, and Romig, all producing less than five titles annually. These statistics furnish substantial evidence that even the largest of the Catholic publishers fall, in the total domestic scene, into the category of small publishers.

6. Bruce's non-technical titles were not considered in this study.

TABLE 2
AVERAGE ANNUAL NUMBER OF NEW TITLES ISSUED BY
CATHOLIC PUBLISHERS, 1930-1942

Rank	Publisher	Average Annual Output of New Titles, 1930-1942
1	Bruce	32.1
2	Sheed & Ward	32.0
3	Benziger	21.0
4	Herder	18.8
5	Kenedy	13.4
6	St. Anthony Guild Press	10.1
7	Wagner	3.6
8	Reilly	3.1
9	Pustet	3.1
10	Devin-Adair	2.2
11	America Press	2.1
12	Murphy	0.7
13	Romig	0.3

The trends in the publishing activity of each firm, based upon the number of new titles produced year by year from 1930 to 1942, may be summarized as follows:

1. Bruce maintained its position in the upper level with greatest consistency and least fluctuation from year to year. However, from 1930 to 1932 it was surpassed by Benziger and Herder, and in 1936 and 1937 by Sheed and Ward.

2. The data for Sheed and Ward began in 1933, the year in which this firm opened its New York office. Although Sheed and Ward reached a higher peak than Bruce during 1936 and 1937, it fell considerably below the Bruce output from 1938 to 1941. By 1942 the number of new titles issued by the two houses was identical. In general, Sheed and Ward's

activity was subject to greater fluctuations than was Bruce's activity.

3. Herder and Benziger in the early 30's surpassed all the other publishers by a considerable margin. Both experienced sharp declines during the depression and never regained their former level.

4. Kenedy maintained a fairly regular pattern of title production. Its decline in the number of new titles issued during the depression was the least of all the publishers. Kenedy's reputation for conservatism was substantiated by this analysis.

5. The data for St. Anthony Guild Press began in 1931 when this firm published its first title. From its inception the number of its titles has risen gradually from year to year. After 1940 its output was surpassed only by that of Bruce and Sheed and Ward.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF THE RELATIVE EMPHASIS PLACED UPON THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS
BY CATHOLIC PUBLISHERS WITH THE EMPHASIS PLACED UPON THESE
SUBJECTS BY ALL AMERICAN PUBLISHERS, 1930-1942

Subject Categories of "International Classification"	Rank		New Titles Published 1930-1942		Number of Catholic Publishers Contributing
	Catholic Publishers	All American Publishers	Catholic Publishers	All American Publishers	
Religion, Theology	1	3	1,073	8,797	13
Juvenile Works	2	2	116	9,560	8
Sociology, Economics	3	4	94	8,336	11
Philosophy, Ethics	4	18	77	1,987	10
Fiction	5	1	73	16,649	10
Poetry, Drama	6	5	55	7,746	8
History	7	6	53	7,503	7
Biography	8	7	41 ^a	7,382	8
General Literature	9	8	39	5,070	5
Philology	10	15	37	2,758	7
Education	11	13	36	3,302	8
Science	12	9	25	4,685	6
Geography, Travel	13	12	12	3,352	5
Fine Arts	14	16	8	2,742	3
Miscellaneous	15	23	8	781	5
Medicine, Hygiene	16	11	3	3,806	4
Technical, Military	17	10	3	4,053	3
Business	18	14	3	2,823	3
Music	19	21	2	1,040	2

^aNon-religious biography; one hundred and ninety-three titles in religious biography were classified as subdivisions of Religion in Religious Biography, and contribute to the 1,073 titles in this field.

Subject Analysis of the Output of Catholic Publishers, 1930-1942

A distribution of the Catholic titles into the subject categories of the "International Classification", a scheme employed in the "Annual Summary Number" of the *Publishers' Weekly*, revealed the relative strength or weakness of the publishers in the various fields. Table 3 (p. 6) exhibits this distribution together with the output of all domestic publishers in the same fields.

It is apparent that the Catholic publishers have been preponderantly more active in the field of Religion and Theology than in any other subject. In fact, this single category comprised approximately sixty per cent of the total Catholic output. That Religion and Theology had the highest title frequency was not astonishing; that this was the only field in which all of the thirteen Catholic publishers contributed was somewhat unex-

pected. In addition, this field was the only one in which the ratio of the Catholic title production to the total domestic production—approximately twelve per cent—was substantial. In all other fields the proportion of Catholic titles to total production was so slight that the Catholic firms could not be considered serious competitors of the general publishers.

It is interesting to observe that Religion and Theology, Sociology and Economics, Fiction, and Juvenile Works rank high with both groups of publishers. History, Biography, Geography and Travel, General Literature, Poetry and Drama come within one of ranking in identically the same position in the two groups; Education, Fine Arts, and Music come within two of the same rank. For the remaining subjects there is a wider divergence in the ranking, Philosophy showing the greatest disparity, with a rank of four and eighteen respectively.

TABLE 4

RELATIVE EMPHASIS PLACED UPON SUBDIVISIONS OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY
BY CATHOLIC PUBLISHERS IN TERMS OF TITLES PUBLISHED, 1930-1942

Rank	Subdivisions	Number of New Titles Published, 1930-1942	Percentage of Total Titles Published in Religion and Theology
1	Religious Biography	193	18
2	Doctrinal Theology	168	16
3	Devotional Literature	155	15
4	Ascetic Theology	100	9
5	Catechetics	81	8
6	Liturgy	70	7
7	Church History	69	6
8	Fundamental Theology: Apologetics	56	5
9	Scripture	47	4
10	Homiletics	35	3
11	Pastoral Theology	25	2
12	Moral Theology: Christian Ethics	22	2
13	Canon Law	17	2
14	Theology in General	13	1
15	Mystic Theology	12	1
16	Christian Literature	10	1
	Total	1,073	100

The foregoing paragraphs have emphasized the numerical preponderance of the category Religion and Theology in the publishing programs of the Catholic houses. Since this field comprised such a large percentage of the activity of these firms, and since one may reasonably presume—although no statistics are readily available to substantiate the assumption—that Catholic publishers handle a large portion of the Catholic literature produced in this field, it seemed to warrant more detailed consideration. This vast subject has many facets, and its literature ranges from the profound discussion of the attributes of God to the most effective methods of administering parochial property. A closer analysis of the output in Religion and Theology revealed the relative emphasis placed upon its various subdivisions. To accomplish this analysis the 1,073 titles issued in this field by the Catholic publishers were classified according to the Lynn scheme.⁷

Arranged in a descending order on the basis of title frequency the several subdivisions of Religion and Theology are shown in Table 4 (p. 7).

From this enumeration it is evident that the first three subdivisions, Religious Biography, Doctrinal Theology, and Devotional Literature, comprised approximately one-half, and the first six subdivisions comprised almost four-fifths of all the titles in Religion and Theology produced by the Catholic publishers. The remaining subdivisions, Church History, Fundamental Theology and Apologetics, Scripture, Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, Moral

Theology, Canon Law, Theology in General, Mystic Theology, and Christian Literature, account for approximately one-fifth of the publications in this diversified field. That Religious Biography surpassed all the other subdivisions should not be surprising in view of the fact that the past two decades have been a great era of biography writing and reading.

The prominence of each subdivision of Table 4 in the publishing programs of the individual Catholic houses may be summarized as follows: Benziger, Bruce, Herder, Kenedy, and Sheed and Ward all emphasized Religious Biography. Devotional Literature was equally prominent in the publishing program of Benziger, Bruce, and Kenedy. Herder surpassed all other publishers in the field of Doctrinal Theology, a subject which received emphasis also on the part of Benziger, Bruce, Kenedy, and Sheed and Ward. Also prominent among the fields of emphasis were Catechetics by Bruce and St. Anthony Guild; Liturgy by Benziger and Bruce; Ascetic Theology by Herder and Benziger; Church History by Bruce and Herder; Apologetics by Sheed and Ward; and Catechetics by St. Anthony Guild.

QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The foregoing summary of the quantitative aspects of the publications issued by Catholic firms leads to the question: How significant have these publications been? What contribution have Catholic publishers made to the field of Catholic letters?

Unfortunately, no objective standards for evaluating that intangible characteristic, the quality of a book, have yet been devised, nor are such standards imminent or even possible. The subjective judgment of the expert and the specialist

7. Jeannette (Murphy) Lynn (comp.), *An Alternative Classification for Catholic Books, a Scheme for Catholic Theology, Canon Law, and Church History; To Be Used with the Dewey Decimal Classification Décimale, or Library of Congress Classifications* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co.; Chicago, The American Library Association, 1937).

will always be the ultimate authority by which the value of a literary composition will be appraised. However, the judgment of the expert has been given objectivity in a number of devices which can be employed as approximate gauges of the worth-whileness of literary productions. Among such devices may be mentioned standard book lists which are the consensus of experts, and book reviews which are the expression of the judgment of specialists. In this study three devices were used in an attempt to appraise the contribution of the Catholic publishers under consideration: (1) a comparison between the number of titles of prominent Catholic authors published by Catholic firms and those published by other domestic firms, (2) a comparison between the number of publications by Catholic firms and those by other domestic firms chosen as the monthly selections of the Catholic Book Club, Incorporated, and (3) the book reviews printed in Catholic journals.

A Comparison of the Titles of Prominent Catholic Authors Published by Catholic Firms with Those Published by Secular Firms

If it is true as Burton Roscoe has said that "publishers are as dependent upon authors and the authors' annual crop of books as Mr. Campbell is upon the farmers and their annual crop of bean",⁸ so it is likewise true that the frequency with which a prominent author submits a manuscript to a given publisher and enters into a contract with him for its publication is a measure of that publisher's ability to market his commodity. In fact, publishers frequently advertise their prestige by printing lists of recog-

nized authors whose manuscripts they handle.

In 1932 there was initiated a bio-bibliographical undertaking known as the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors, the primary purpose of which is to promote the recognition of living Catholic authors and their works, and to establish an international clearing house of biographical and bibliographical information on all noteworthy contemporary Catholic writers of whatever nationality.⁹ To date, some three hundred American and non-American authors have been admitted to membership.¹⁰ This roster, the most distinguished list of contemporary Catholic authors, was used as a gauge of the effectiveness of Catholic publishers in securing the manuscripts of prominent Catholic authors.

One hundred and five citizens or residents of the United States who are members of the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors published a total of 210 titles during the years 1940 to 1942.¹¹ The ratio between the number of publications of these authors issued by the Catholic firms and the number of the publications of these authors issued by the secular firms during the three years chosen as a sample was used as an index of the contribution of the Catholic publishers in the field of Catholic literature.

Table 5 shows the distribution of these 210 titles into three groups of publishers: (1) The Catholic publishers considered in this study, (2) all other American Catholic publishers, and (3) secular pub-

8. Burton Roscoe, "What's Wrong with Publishers!" *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXIII (November 2, 1940), 3.

9. "The Gallery of Living Catholic Authors," *Catholic Bookman*, III (January-February, 1940), 68.

10. "Members of Gallery of Living Catholic Authors," *National Catholic Almanac*, XXXVIII (1944), 445-47.

11. These data were determined by checking the list of members of the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors against *The Guide to Catholic Literature*, Vol. II (1940-1944), ed. by W. Romig (Detroit: Walter Romig & Company, 1944).

lishers. The Catholic firms under consideration in this study published sixty-four titles by "Gallery" authors, while secular firms published 105 titles by these authors, a ratio of approximately two to three. On the basis of the publishers selected by the "Gallery" authors, the Catholic publishers under consideration here made a smaller contribution to the field of Catholic literature than did the secular publishers. If the "Gallery" titles of all Catholic publishers are compared with the "Gallery" titles of the secular publishers, the ratio is exactly one to one, each group contributing 105 titles.

Table 5 also exhibits the distribution of the "Gallery" titles by subject. Examination of columns two and four gives evidence that the authors preferred the Catholic publishers for religious titles, and the secular publishers for Poetry and Drama, Fiction, Juvenile Literature, and History. In other fields the numbers are too small to have significance.

The sixty-four titles issued by the Catholic firms were distributed according to the issuing publisher, giving the enumeration recorded in Table 6. From these statistics it is apparent that fifty titles, or approximately four-fifths of the total, were published by four firms: Sheed and Ward, Bruce, Kenedy, and St. Anthony Guild. The remaining one-fifth, comprising fourteen titles, was issued by five firms: America, Herder, Wagner, Benziger, and Devin-Adair.

A Comparison of the Titles of Catholic Publishers and the Titles of Secular Publishers Chosen as the Monthly Selection of the Catholic Book Club

A second device used in appraising the contribution of Catholic publishers was the monthly selections of the Catholic Book Club, Incorporated. This club was organized in 1928 as a constructive effort

. . . to stimulate our Catholic authors, and to enlist our Catholic people in the support of this better literature. It aims to place

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF TITLES BY "GALLERY" AUTHORS PUBLISHED BY
THREE GROUPS OF PUBLISHERS FROM 1940 TO 1942

Subjects	Titles of "Gallery" Authors Published by Catholic Firms Included in This Study, 1940-42	Titles of "Gallery" Authors Published by Other Catholic Firms, 1940-42	Titles of "Gallery" Authors Published by Secular Firms, 1940-42	Total
Philosophy, Ethics	2	3	1	6
Religion, Theology	35	18	21	74
Sociology, Economics	5	6	7	18
Education	1	1	---	2
Philology	---	---	1	1
General Literature	3	3	2	8
Poetry, Drama	5	3	12	20
Fiction	4	3	29	36
Juvenile Literature	---	2	14	16
History	4	2	12	14
Geography, Travel	1	---	1	1
Biography	4	---	5	9
Total	64	41	105	210
Percentage	30	20	50	100

TABLE 6
DISTRIBUTION BY PUBLISHER OF THE SIXTY-FOUR "GALLERY" TITLES
ISSUED BY THE CATHOLIC FIRMS FROM 1940 TO 1942

Publisher	Number of "Gallery" Titles Published, 1940-1942
Sheed & Ward	18
Bruce	12
Kenedy	10
St. Anthony Guild	10
America	5
Herder	5
Wagner	2
Benziger	1
Devin-Adair	1
Total.....	64

Catholic literature on a par with the very best reading of the day; in other words, to secure an increased sale and interest in good Catholic books, and to encourage Catholic writers by providing a public for Catholic work of real literary quality.¹²

The book-of-the-month is chosen by a board of five editors from manuscripts and galley proofs of Catholic authors submitted by both Catholic and secular publishers. The editors aim to select the most important, the most interesting, and the most literary production of the current month by a Catholic author or in keeping with Catholic principles. Purely devotional books are not eligible for selection.

The representation of titles by Catholic publishers in the monthly selections of the Catholic Book Club may be considered an index of the contribution of Catholic publishers to the field of current popular Catholic literature. The selections of the club for the years 1930 to 1942 were analyzed according to subject and publisher,¹³ with the results exhibited in Table 7. Publishers and subjects omitted from this tabulation were not represented in the selections.

Inspection of the table shows that of the 168 titles chosen as books-of-the-month 129 titles, or seventy-seven per cent, were selected from the output of the general publishers, thirty-four titles, or twenty per cent, were selected from the output of Catholic publishers considered in this study, and five titles, or three per cent, were chosen from other Catholic publishers. Roughly, the ratio of representation of the general publishers to the Catholic publishers under consideration was four to one. The table also discloses the fact that six Catholic publishers were represented in the books-of-the-month: America, Benziger, Bruce, Devin-Adair, Kenedy, and Sheed and Ward. Of these, Sheed and Ward had not only the highest frequency, eighteen, but contributed more than all the other publishers combined. Bruce had the second highest frequency, with a contribution of seven titles.

Using the monthly selections of the Catholic Book Club for a period of twelve years as an index, one found that the Catholic publishers made an appreciably smaller contribution to the field of current popular Catholic literature than did the general publishers. It is not surprising that in the fields of fiction and biography the general publishers greatly outnumbered

12. Quoted in "With Scrip and Staff", *America*, XXXIX (May 12, 1928), 114.

13. Data for this tabulation were furnished by Mr. Sterns Cunningham, director of the Catholic Book Club, Inc.

TABLE 7
NUMBER OF TITLES BY THREE GROUPS OF PUBLISHERS REPRESENTED
IN SELECTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC BOOK CLUB, INC., 1930-1942

Subjects	Catholic Publishers Included In This Study							Other Catholic Publishers	General Publishers	Total
	America	Beniger	Bruce	Devlin-Adair	Kenedy	Sheed & Ward	Total			
Philosophy, Ethics	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	2	2
Religion, Theology	1	1	1	---	---	8	11	2	38	51
Sociology, Economics	---	---	2	1	---	1	4	---	3	7
Fine Arts	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	2	2
General Literature	---	---	1	---	---	1	2	---	4	6
Poetry, Drama	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1	6	7
Fiction	---	1	---	---	---	4	5	---	41	46
History	---	---	1	---	---	1	2	---	6	8
Geography, Travel	1	---	---	---	1	---	2	2	5	9
Biography	---	2	2	1	1	2	8	---	22	30
Total	2	4	7	2	2	18	34	5	129	168
Percentage							20	3	77	100

bered the Catholic publishers; it is surprising that even in the field of religion the former made a considerably greater contribution than the latter. We have seen that doctrinal theology and devotional literature are two of the largest groups of religious publications of the Catholic firms. Many titles in the first category are not sufficiently popular in character to warrant being chosen as the book-of-the-month, and titles in the second category are not considered for selection. Doubtless, this fact partially explains the low representation of the product of Catholic publishers among the religious titles chosen as books-of-the-month.

The Book Review as a Measuring Device for Catholic Publications

The third device used to evaluate the contribution of Catholic publishers was the book review. This method of appraising the effectiveness of a title has been used before. In 1939 Dr. Robert

Frederick Lane devised this technique in an attempt to estimate the quality of American university press publications. Says Dr. Lane:

As indexes of the quality of publications, reviews are highly regarded because they reflect expert opinion. The reliance placed upon such compilations as the *Book Review Digest* by book users and by book purchasers is generally recognized. The academic world also estimates the success or importance of its published contributions in terms of reviews received. Book sales are said to bear some relation to review notices, and recently the university presses complained that the slowness of learned journals in carrying reviews warranted the development of a speedier reviewing medium . . .

The review, therefore, seems to provide the most acceptable, the most immediate, the most representative, and the most available means of determining the quality of book titles.¹⁴

14. Robert Frederick Lane, "The Place of American University Presses in Publishing" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1939), pp. 121-22.

The extent to which the titles of Catholic publishers were reviewed in twenty-six of the most prominent and scholarly Catholic periodicals during a two-year period, 1940-1941, was used as a criterion for appraising the quality of these titles. The writer is aware that factors other than the importance or general excellence of a work, such as a publisher's policy in distributing review copies of his titles, may exert a measure of influence upon the amount of book reviewing attention accorded to a given title or a specific publisher. However, that there is an approximate relationship between the importance of a title and the reviews it receives cannot be denied. Important contributions inevitably attract notice.

All of the journals selected were Catholic and American. Included were general periodicals such as *America*, *Commonweal*, and *Catholic World*, and periodicals representing special subject fields, such as *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, *Mid-America*, and *Review of Politics*. It is believed that no important Catholic periodical published in America, carrying book reviews in sufficient number to be of value in this study, was omitted. The book reviews in all of the issues of these periodicals were checked for the years 1940 and 1941 to ascertain the number of reviews accorded to titles of Catholic publishers.

Dr. Lane's study contained an analysis of reviews of American publications in sixty-eight selected English and American periodicals during 1935 to 1937. His findings demonstrated that the book reviewing attention accorded to all domestic publishers was distributed among the three large divisions of knowledge into which he classified all titles, humanities, social sciences, and sciences, in the ratio

of one to one to one.¹⁵ The book reviewing attention of the Catholic periodicals accorded to titles by Catholic publishers was roughly grouped among these three divisions in the ratio of five to one to zero. The humanities, including religion, received 836 reviews, social sciences 166 reviews, and science no reviews. Religion with 628, accounted for three-fourths of all the reviews in the humanities and over one-half of all the reviews in all subjects; philosophy and ethics with sixty-one reviews, general literature with fifty-one, and history with thirty-four accounted for three-fourths of the remainder of the reviews received by the humanities. In the social sciences, sociology and economics with 144 reviews accounted for ninety per cent of all reviews in this field, leaving ten per cent for education and miscellaneous titles.

In summary, it may be stated that the subjects which received the greatest amount of reviewing attention in the Catholic journals were religion, the social sciences, philosophy, general literature, and history. To these may be added fiction and juvenile works which received thirty-seven and thirty-one reviews respectively. If it be admitted that reviews are an index of the importance of a title, then the Catholic publishers made by far their most significant contribution in the field of religion—a contention borne out by every aspect of this study. Following this subject at a remote distance were the social sciences, philosophy, general literature, history, fiction, and juvenile works, all of which combined received less than half the reviewing attention given to religion. Furthermore, if the incidence of book reviews be accepted as a criterion of the importance of a publication, the

15. Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

Catholic firms made no significant contribution to any of the branches of science.

An analysis by publisher of the reviews of the 1940 titles of the Catholic firms disclosed the relative effectiveness of each publisher in the field of Catholic literature. The findings of this analysis may be summarized as follows:

1. In most cases there was a high positive relationship between the number of titles a publisher issued and the number of reviews he received.

2. Bruce and Sheed and Ward had the largest output and received the most reviews. Hence, it seems correct to say that they made the greatest contributions to the field of Catholic literature. Sheed and Ward titles were more successful in attracting reviews than Bruce titles.

3. Kenedy and Herder had appreciably smaller outputs than Bruce and Sheed and Ward, but had a higher average per title effectiveness as measured by reviews per title. The former are probably more conservative publishers and are willing to take fewer risks than the latter.

4. Wagner, America Press, Pustet, and Romig issued five or less titles in 1940. As measured by the number of reviews per title, they were all moderately effective contributions to Catholic publishing.

5. The remaining publishers made little contributions to Catholic publishing in 1940.

The over-all implication of the results of the application of the three measuring sticks was the superiority of the general publishers over the Catholic publishers in the production of effective and successful Catholic literature.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing summary of specific findings permits several generalizations. In spite of the weaknesses of the Catholic

publishing program, the Catholic publishers have succeeded in bringing into print an impressive and commendable corpus of religious literature which would otherwise have been unavailable to American Catholics. Secular publishers are understandably not concerned with these scholarly theological treatises, both English originals and translations. English translations of outstanding European classics in theological literature, which houses such as Herder and Benziger have introduced into this country, constitute in themselves a subject worthy of serious study. His Excellency, Giovanni Cardinal Mercati, Librarian and Archivist of the Holy Roman Church, has stated that the products of Catholic thought of Europe make a notable contribution to American culture and should be encouraged through translation by publisher, reviewer and librarian.¹⁶ Nor can the secular firms be expected to promote the publication of the devotional literature which is intended to quicken the spiritual life of both clergy and laity. The contribution of the Catholic publisher in making this literature easily accessible is inestimable.

This very strength of the Catholic publisher, based as it is on the unity and universality of Catholic belief, is the source of his greatest weakness—his failure to contribute in a vital manner to the intellectual, social, and political life of twentieth century America. The *Bible*, the *Missal*, the *Breviary*, the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Baltimore Catechism*, Gibbon's *Faith of Our Fathers*, and numerous other long-established texts have been the stable commodity of many of the Catholic firms for decades. The remunera-

16. Igino Giordani, "An Address to the Catholic Library Association", *Catholic Library World*, X (October, 1938), 54.

tion from these standard classics, widely distributed as they are in Catholic seminaries, schools, and households throughout the land, has given to the Catholic publisher a measure of economic security, but not a financial independence sufficiently adequate to encourage him to undertake in a more extensive and dynamic way the presentation of the many problems of the twentieth century. If the Catholic publisher is to be an effective force in molding American thought of the present day, he must break away from his traditional policy of conservatism, and risk a more diversified repertoire of seasonable subjects. Several titles which have emanated from Catholic publishing houses within recent years are a healthy indication that a more progressive trend has been initiated. The favorable reviews in both Catholic and secular journals accorded to such publications as Christopher Dawson's *The Judgment of the Nations* (Sheed, 1942), Guido Gonella's *A World to Reconstruct*; Pius XII on *Peace and Reconstruction* (Bruce, 1944), Max Jordan's *Beyond All Fronts, a Bystander's Notes on This Thirty Years' War* (Bruce, 1944), Jacques Maritain's *The Twilight of Civilization* (Sheed, 1943), the William J. Kerby Foundation's *Democracy: Should it Survive?* and Yves Simon's *The Road to Vichy, 1918-1938* (Sheed, 1942) should be a source of encouragement to all Catholic publishers. Four of the titles cited, as well as numerous other examples which might be mentioned, are the products of foreign authors. The Catholic publishers deserve highest commendation for making this European literature easily available for American consumption. Meanwhile they should seize in a more virile way the opportunity of presenting established and

potential American Catholic writers to an American reading public.

Mr. Frank Bruce of the Bruce Publishing Company has recently expressed the necessity of seeking new authors and promoting new talent in these words:

Formerly Catholic book-buying was confined almost exclusively to the clergy. The layman's entrance into the field, even though in itself gratifying, has introduced a new and somewhat disturbing element—the increased demand requires stepped-up production but unfortunately, a noticeable poverty of Catholic writers hinders production. This situation exists because we have made no conscious effort to discover ability and then because we have never faced the obvious truth that writing is a difficult chore which requires many things besides the subsidy of a religious community.¹⁷

The time has come when Catholic publishers must make strong efforts to search out native ability and to demonstrate to potential American Catholic writers, especially among the laity, the compatibility between the pursuit of letters and the securing of a substantial livelihood.

That the secular publishers have succeeded in attracting a not insignificant share of the manuscripts of Catholic authors has been pointed out statistically in the preceding pages if the members of the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors be accepted as a representative sample of contemporary Catholic writers, and if the selections of the Catholic Book Club be regarded as a reliable sample of current Catholic titles. It is probably a safe assumption to attribute the failure of the Catholic publishers to attract these manuscripts at least partially to the absence of a vigorous advertising program and schedule of sale promotion. A goodly number of these publications is of a sufficiently

17. "Calling Catholic Authors", *Between the Lines*, III (Spring, 1945), 2.

general nature to arouse interest outside a Catholic reading public, for example, Paul Furfey's *History of Social Thought* (Macmillan, 1942), Carlton J. Hayes' *Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900* (Harper, 1941), Ferdinand Hermen's *Tyrant's War and the People's Peace* (University of Chicago, 1944), John La Farge's *Race Question and the Negro* (Longmans, 1943), Jacques Maritain's *Education at the Crossroads* (Yale University, 1943), and Francis Meehan's *Living Upstairs, Reading for Pleasure and Profit* (Dutton, 1942). In the interviews with the representatives of the several Catholic firms, the writer discovered that few of these publishers advertise their publications in secular media. The fact that Catholic authors submit the manuscripts which they believe suitable for general consumption to a secular publisher whose sales promotion program includes advertisement in secular as well as religious media is thoroughly understandable. Until Catholic publishers promote a wider reading public by a more extensive advertising and sales promotions program, they will continue to forfeit many of the timely manuscripts of Catholic authors, whether clerical or lay.

Finally, it is not an uncommon practice for Catholic publishers to undertake to be publishers, retail booksellers, and dealers in religious goods simultaneously.

This threefold sphere of activity is the natural outgrowth of enterprises which for decades have handled the printed page as only one of several commodities. Such dispersion of interest and energy over an area broad enough to include church furnishing, liturgical vestments, and religious articles has inevitably weakened the concentration necessary for pursuing a dynamic publishing program, and has seriously handicapped Catholic firms in their competition with the secular publishers.

The implications for future development and expansion in Catholic publishing which these deficiencies indicate may be succinctly summarized:

1. A more vital and aggressive participation in the production of books on the current problems of the day.
2. A sustained program of advertising and promotion to assure authors of at least as wide a reading public and an equal number of sales as they reach through secular publishers.
3. Greater effort to improve the general format of books.
4. A conscious attempt to discover new talent and to promote new authors, chiefly American.
5. Concentration of energy and ability on the publication and distribution of books.

—Reprinted from *The Catholic Library World*, official organ of the Catholic Library Association, April-May, 1946.

